CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of performing communications intercepts in a communications system comprising at least one satellite communications node and a plurality of subscriber units, the method comprising:

selecting one of the plurality of subscriber units as a target subscriber unit; and

intercepting a communication with the target subscriber unit when it reaches the at least one satellite communications node.

2. The method recited in claim 1 wherein the communications system further comprises a network management facility, the method further comprising:

the network management facility transmitting an intercept order to the at least one satellite communications node.

3. The method recited in claim 2 wherein the at least one communications node comprises a memory, the method further comprising:

the at least one satellite communications node storing the intercept order into an intercept table in the memory.

4. The method recited in claim 3 wherein in the selecting operation more than one of the plurality of subscriber units is selected as a target subscriber unit, wherein the selecting operation is performed by at least one intercept requestor having an intercept requestor ID, and wherein the intercept table comprises a list of all target subscriber units within the communications system, each target subscriber unit having associated therewith at least one intercept requestor ID.

5. The method recited in claim 2 wherein the intercept order comprises a subscriber unit ID corresponding to the target subscriber unit.

6. The method recited in claim 5 and further comprising:

the at least one satellite communications node determining whether a received communication comprises the subscriber unit ID for the target subscriber unit;

intercepting the communication when said at least one satellite communications node determines said communication comprises said subscriber unit ID; and

transmitting without intercepting the communication when said at least one satellite communications node determines said communication does not comprise said subscriber unit ID.

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7. The method recited in claim 6 wherein the communications system further comprises a network intercept facility, and wherein the intercept order comprises a network intercept facility ID identifying the network intercept facility, the method further comprising:

if the at least one satellite communications node intercepts the communication, transmitting the communication to the network intercept facility.

8. The method recited in claim 2 wherein the communications system further comprises a network intercept facility, and wherein the intercept order comprises a network intercept facility ID identifying the network intercept facility, the method further comprising:

the at least one satellite communications node transmitting the communication to the network intercept facility.

9. The method recited in claim 8 wherein the intercept order identifies an intercept requestor, the method further comprising:

the network intercept facility addressing a transmission of the intercepted communication to the intercept requestor.

10. The method recited in claim 8 wherein the intercept order identifies an intercept requestor, the method further comprising:

the network intercept facility providing a transmission of the intercepted communication to the intercept requestor.

11. A satellite communications node for use in a communications system having a plurality of communications nodes, the satellite communications node comprising:

a transceiver to receive communications from one communications node and to transmit communications to another communications node;

a data processing system, including a processing element and a memory, to execute at least one computer program performing intercepts in the communications system, the at least one computer program when executed comprising the operations of:

storing an intercept order comprising a target communications node ID in the memory;

evaluating a communication received by the transceiver to determine whether it comprises the target communications node ID;

if so, intercepting the communication; and

if not, controlling the transceiver to transmit the communication without intercepting it.

12. The satellite communications node recited in claim 11 wherein the intercept order is stored in an intercept table in the memory.

13. The satellite communications node recited in claim 11 wherein the intercept order further comprises a start time when evaluating is to start, and wherein evaluating starts at the start time.

14. The satellite communications node recited in claim 11 wherein the intercept order further comprises a stop time when evaluating is to stop, and wherein evaluating stops at the stop time.

15. The satellite communications node recited in claim 11 wherein the at least one computer program when executed comprises the additional operations of:

if the communication is intercepted, generating a communication clone; and

controlling the transceiver to transmit the communication clone to another of the communications nodes.

16. The satellite communications node recited in claim 15 wherein the intercept order further comprises an ID corresponding to a network intercept facility to which a communication clone is to be transmitted, and wherein the transceiver is controlled to transmit the communication clone to the network intercept facility.

17. The satellite communications node recited in claim 16 wherein the intercept order further comprises a start time when evaluating is to start, wherein evaluating starts at the start time, and wherein the start time has a different granularity than a start time stored at the network intercept facility corresponding to the intercept order.

18. The satellite communications node recited in claim 16 wherein the intercept order further comprises a stop time when evaluating is to start, wherein evaluating starts at the start time, and wherein the start time has a different granularity than a stop time stored at the network intercept facility corresponding to the intercept order.

19. The satellite communications node recited in claim 15 wherein the intercept order further comprises an ID corresponding to an intercept requestor to which a communication clone is to be transmitted, and wherein the transceiver is controlled to transmit the communication clone to the intercept requestor.

20. A communications facility for use in a communications system comprising a plurality of communications nodes, including at least one satellite communications node in which communications are intercepted, the communications facility comprising:

a transceiver to receive communications from one communications node and to transmit communications to another communications node;

a data processing system, including a processing element and a memory, the processing element executing at least one computer program stored in the memory, the at least one computer program when executed comprising the operations of:

generating an intercept order comprising a target communications node ID, the target communications node ID being assigned to a communications node whose communications are desired to be intercepted; and

transmitting the intercept order to the at least one satellite communications node.

21. The communications facility recited in claim 20 wherein the intercept order further comprises a communications node ID corresponding to a communications node to which an intercepted communication is to be transmitted.

22. The communications facility recited in claim 21 wherein the at least one computer program when executed comprises the additional operation of:

transmitting the intercept order to the communications node corresponding to the communications node ID.

23. The communications facility recited in claim 20 wherein the intercept order further comprises an identifier corresponding to an intercept requestor requesting an intercept and to which an intercepted communication is to be transmitted.

24. The communications facility recited in claim 23 wherein the at least one computer program when executed comprises the additional operation of:

transmitting the intercept order to the intercept requestor corresponding to the identifier.